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MUSIC IN THE GRADES

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The report of the round table conference at Evansville devoted to problems of music in the grades was received too late for printing in the volume of Proceedings. It is of such value that it is given below.—P. W. D.)

The Grade Section was held Thursday afternoon, April 11th, with Miss Caroline B. Bourgard, of Louisville, Ky., presiding. The following topics were discussed:

1. How to Increase the Efficiency of the Grade Teacher—Miss Woody, Anderson, Ind.
2. Community Songs and Singing—Miss Cora Conaway, York, Neb.
3. The Wider Use of the Talking Machine—Miss Helen Boswell, Louisville, Ky.
4. Instrumental Music in the Grades—Mr. John G. Koch, Norwood, Ohio.
5. Tests and Measurements—Miss Stella Root, St. Cloud Normal, Minnesota.
6. My Ideal of a Successful Music Supervisor—Miss Catherine Zisgen, Trenton, N. J.

Up to the time of going to press the manuscripts of only numbers 1, 2 and 4 have been received.

HELEN MCBRIDE, *Secretary.*
Louisville, Ky.

1. HOW TO MAKE THE GRADE TEACHER MORE EFFICIENT

BLANCHE WOODY, Anderson, Ind.

The success of any one in any line of work is controlled almost absolutely by his attitude toward it. To be pleasantly and amiably disposed toward what we have to do is half the battle. To contemplate each day and its incumbent duties with a dread, a fear, or a doubt, is to force ourselves to twice as much as is required. Not only must the work be done but this mental unrest must also be overcome. That person who can so completely lose himself that he forgets himself, really finds himself. In such an individual there is no question of genuine interest and hence of a wholesome stimulating attitude toward his work.

I believe that the dawning of each September and the opening of the school year finds the teaching force of even a large school system pleasantly disposed toward the year's work. Many are fresh from summer training in Universities, Colleges and Normal schools and are enthusiastic with new ideas and purposes; are strengthened and broadened by the contact with new environment and new personalities, with new interpretations and applications of old ideas.

Then there is such a thrill in beginning, just beginning again, new and fresh, leaving all the old mistakes behind to press forward toward a new goal. Enthusiastic *beginnings* are indeed most common, most normal. And in the beginning of the new endeavor how little any one contemplates failure; such contemplations are eliminated by the thoughts of successful achievement.

The Supervisor of any group of people in any department of work will do well then to take advantage of this spirit of sanguine hopefulness and enthusiasm which characterizes himself and his corps of workers in the *beginning*. I mean that he shall by definite, positive statements of his ideals and ultimate aims, by the force of his own sincere belief in the vital value of the subject be an incentive to further promulgate this attitude. Everyone is in a state of anticipation. The members of each department are looking toward the one appointed as their head for guidance, for definite statement of plan and purpose.

To disappoint this feeling of expectancy would be the most flagrant error. Over feeding at this point is better than under-feeding.

The Supervisor of Music finds himself before a body of teachers who have all the characteristics of individuals at the beginning of a new enterprise. They are enthusiastic, hopeful, prepared to make, and desirous of making, a success. Their attitude is all that can be desired. It lies then with the Supervisor to preserve that attitude, to develop it into something so vital that it will characterize the work in music from September until June. By what means is this to be done?

The first requisite is that of preparation; preparation on the part of the Supervisor himself. The individual who approaches his work without the backing of sufficient preparation is wonderfully handicapped. The day is fast passing when the person who is merely a musician will be considered able to cope with the public school music situation. The requirements for grade teachers have advanced in almost every state in the union. But the requirements for the preparation of "special" teachers, so-called, have not advanced proportionately. Many a Supervisor, then, is bound to suffer embarrassment from his lack of pedagogical training and knowledge of methods used in presenting other subjects.

The sense of his own limitations will manifest itself in his indefiniteness, in his inability to give definite answers when different problems are brought to him from time to time for solution, in his inability to enter into lively sympathy with the grade teacher in the multitudinous requirements made of her; in his failure oftentimes to convince the Superintendent of Schools of the value of music and to gain the proper place for it in the curriculum. It is then with difficulty that he keeps his attitude toward his work and his workers, amiable and inspiring. I would plead for a broader, more comprehensive scholastic training for directors of public school music: a training which embraces a study of pedagogy, literature, some science and art, and gives a vision beyond the pales and confines of the subject in which he has specialized. Superior knowledge on the part of *any* leader begets in his followers a confidence and respect which cannot be attained in any other way.

The second requisite for preserving this receptive and co-operative attitude on the part of the teachers is that of definiteness of *purpose* of the music course. The ultimate aim must be kept in sight constantly as the goal toward which the prescribed work of each grade is a stepping stone.

If the object is that children at the conclusion of the course in public school music shall be able to read at sight and sing in good voice and with fair interpretation good compositions, that object should be clearly set forth and elucidated so that every one in the group will appreciate its force. How well such a purpose correlates with that of the course in reading, for instance, where the object is to read at sight and with good inflection and interpretation standard literary compositions. The same pedagogy which brings results in the teaching of reading will bring results also in the teaching of music.

Teachers like every one else have the impression so often that music as a "special" subject (Heaven speed the day when it will be an indispensable subject, a regular curriculum requirement every where) is only to be handled by the talented few. But I have been agreeably surprised at the teacher's giving up this idea when the work for her grade with its tonal and rhythmic problems is clearly prescribed and analyzed and the method of presenting each definitely planned—she sees the reasonableness of it; she sees that it pedagogically correlates with the teaching of other subjects which she knows she can teach and she learns in a definite way herself sometimes, what had been to her before mystical and unreal.

The third requisite for preserving the proper attitude toward the subject is that there be definiteness of plan, first in regard to subject matter and methods, second in regard to meetings with the teachers. The first is a matter

between the supervisor and the teachers; the second between the supervisor and the superintendent or district supervisor. This, I believe is the most important of all the means by which the grade teacher is to become more efficient. No teacher in a class room can expect good results in the preparation of lessons and the advancement of the pupils in the subject unless the assignment is definite. So no supervisor can expect to find the work in music advancing unless at the beginning of the month or at the regular grade meeting, whenever it may be, he definitely prescribes material and methods for the work of that month. Recent publications of texts for public school music have recognized this necessity, and have graded the work, month by month, year by year from the first to the eighth year in such a logical way that the work for the supervisor is much simplified. However, I believe that a typewritten plan made by the supervisor for each grade and put in the hands of each teacher has a personal touch and establishes a greater co-operation. This too is almost a necessity in meeting the conditions of the school system which you are serving. This plan, of course, correlates with the texts which are already in the hands of the teacher.

First a synopsis of the work for the year stating the tonal and rhythmic problems which are new to that grade gives a general survey of the entire field. Month by month the special exercises for the study of the new tones, intervals and rhythmic problems are prescribed at the grade meeting and instructions given for presenting them with such accuracy that the grade teacher unversed though she may consider herself to be, will be able to present the new problem clearly. The songs for the month may be read and sung with attention to their thought and interpretation.

I believe that a progressive teacher, no, I will change that, I believe that any teacher set and staid though she be, welcomes a new idea, a new method, new material when it is presented to her enthusiastically in a tangible, practical, simple, not-too-technical way. It is an innovation, a diversion and she takes hold of it as such with renewed energy and becomes unconsciously and in spite of herself progressive.

Now the question of arranging a time of meeting with the teachers of each grade may not be an easy matter in some places. We in Indiana have been favored in this regard by the recent action of the state legislature which provides for a city institute on Saturday in each month for which teachers are paid—superintendents very wisely in many places have given half of the day to the supervisors of the different departments to meet the teachers in the grade groups according to a schedule. In the time allotted to each supervisor the plans for the month can be well covered. The unity and harmony which results from these meetings cannot be over-estimated and *economic* value to the community of the institute more than compensates for the expense to which the board of education is put in maintaining it. I realize that this simplifies greatly the question of time of teacher's meetings. I believe that there is scarcely a superintendent to be found who will not co-operate with the supervisor in arranging for such meetings. Furthermore teachers request meetings when they realize the earnestness and sincerity of the supervisor in obtaining definite results in music. The concessions which are gained from the superintendent are proportionate to our own powers to convince him, our energy, sincerity, and tenacity.

There are other means by which the grade teacher may be rendered more efficient, but it seems to me that they are subordinate to some one of the methods already mentioned. The supervisor who is keeping the attitude of his teachers wholesome and inspiring, by virtue of his own ample preparation, and second by his definiteness of purpose and third by his definiteness of plan is the person who will make his own class room demonstrations definite and pedagogically sound; who will render assistance individually in personal conferences; who will be tactful, not politic, and just in his criticisms who will keep his own time schedule conscientiously, and who will be clever in arranging for public competitions and exhibitions which are a great incentive to pupils, teachers and patrons.

There so many attractive ramifications in the musical field, that the supervisor often finds it difficult to confine himself to definite limitations. The community through its church choirs, need of private teachers, and community choruses makes demands upon him which are pleasureable and remunerative. But his first and foremost duty is to the teachers and through them to the pupils of the first six grades; without this there can be no Junior High School music of any worth, and no intelligent work in Senior High School.

There is nothing which a Supervisor of Music can do in the way of public entertainments, with their garnishings of costumes, paint and foot lights, with their fairies skipping and amateur ballets tripping, or their befeathered Indians, and saintly Puritans, or bombastic Kings and abused Princesses, with all of which, we are only too familiar—there is nothing which can make atonement for the neglect of the work in the first six grades when the children are in that rare plastic stage when they can learn anything, if they are only taught it in a sound, pedagogical manner.

2. COMMUNITY SONGS AND SINGING

CORA CONWAY, York, Nebraska.

What can be done by the grades for Community Music? That question cannot be answered or even guessed. We are all dreamers, more or less. Jeanne d' Arc was not the only person who has seen visions and heard voices calling her to lead her people to victory. But she was absolutely fearless. Some of you are being urged by your visions and voices from within, to rise up and do a big thing, but fear of public criticism, or the failure of your undertaking, is keeping your light hid under a bushel. Let us take her as an example—go ahead, not arrogantly, but with a genuine faith in the good to be accomplished and who can tell where our efforts may lead. To my mind, a performance of any kind by the children of the grades means an unusual interest taken by practically all people. It has its own peculiar attraction, no matter if the work presented is not quite so artistic as that given by pupils of the Junior High School or Senior High School. All I can bring to you is just what we are doing and some of the things we are hoping to accomplish, which will doubtless sound very small to many. But if it gives one little spark of inspiration to anyone, I shall indeed be gratified.

For five years previous to this one, at the Christmas season, we have had had an assembling of all the grade children in our largest church for the purpose of singing together the Christmas hymns and carols. In this way the parents have become familiar with these songs, and now at the Christmas time it is very noticeable how well the Church congregations are singing, not mumbling, but really singing the beautiful story of the Christ Child, taught them, as many have told me, by their own children.

This year the Commercial Club thought it worth while to request the children to sing in the down town districts, each night for one week before Christmas. You may think the Club had a mere mercenary object. Perhaps so—but the result was far different. We sang by Ward schools—each evening a different school furnishing the concert. You would have been amazed as I was, at the number of people who followed the children from place to place as they sang, and how many joined with them in their singing. The tired shoppers seemed glad of the opportunity to turn their minds to more peaceful things, and many clerks and employers were seen in the crowd of listeners, forgetting their weariness in the uplift of song, and the real meaning of Christmas. It had its effect on the children as well, they felt they were doing something worth while, giving of themselves for the happiness of others. It also gave them a chance to hear other wards sing, and in every case had a splendid effect on their future work. Those who were doing very well, took a just pride in the fact, while in one or two cases the hearing of better work, proved a remarkable stimulus to both children and grade teachers. Yes, it was hard for the Supervisor, and if